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A POVERTY TRAP FEAR

BENEFIT claimants could be pushed into poverty because of Government welfare reforms, Cherwell District Council has warned.

The Conservative-controlled authority sounded the warning over cuts to housing and council tax benefit and an overall cap on all benefits.

It is now looking to put aside £150,000 to help struggling families with small grants for everyday essentials.

Housing association tenants face a housing benefit cut if their home is judged too big, while all benefits will be capped at £26,000 a year.

And the council has had its funding for council tax benefit cut by ten per cent, known as the council tax reduction scheme.

A report by a council officer says the Government wants to "ensure people are better off in work".

It goes on: "However, our analysis shows that there is a large correlation between those households likely to be impacted by welfare reform and those hit by the council tax reduction scheme.

"The combined effect could push more people into poverty and homelessness.

"They would then turn to the council for help."

The number of district housing benefit claimants rose from 5,760 in November 2009 to 7,720 in August, 2012.

Meanwhile, council tax benefit claimants went up from a figure of 7,710 in November 2009 to 8,160 last year.

Cherwell's finance chief, Ken Attack, said of the £150,000 fund: "It may be their washing machine has broken down. If you have a family with four or

By Oliver Evans

five kids, then that becomes a crisis. If we don't put something in to cover such expenses, we would look rather silly if things do hit hard."

Housing benefit has already undergone major changes.

Payouts were cut in 2011 so 30 per cent, instead of 50 per cent, of rents would be fully covered by the benefit. Five-bedroom homes were also disallowed.

A "bedroom tax" will be introduced this April, which will cut benefits by up to 25 per cent for tenants with "extra" bedrooms.

Labour group leader Patrick

Cartledge said: "The council is going to see a lot more homeless people.

"These changes will mean people are not going to be able to afford the rents they are paying.

"We have to reduce the benefits bill, there is no doubt about that, but the housing benefit problem is, in my opinion, down to the private rented sector."

Private rents should be capped by Government to cut back on people relying on housing benefit to make ends meet, he said.

The council's warning came as it prepared to agree its budget for the next financial year.

Government cash support will fall from about £7.6m to £7.2m – that is a 5.4 per cent reduction – while the following year it will be 15 per cent less.

Yet the council has pledged to freeze its part of the council tax – which amounts to about ten per cent of each homeowner's bill – for 12 months starting in April.

A Government spokesman for the Communities and Local Government department said it had given the council £203,354 to support residents.

A spokesman said: "Our reforms restore fairness to a system that had spiralled out of control."

■ County council cuts: Page 9



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LEFT:
Ken Attack



RIGHT:
Patrick Cartledge

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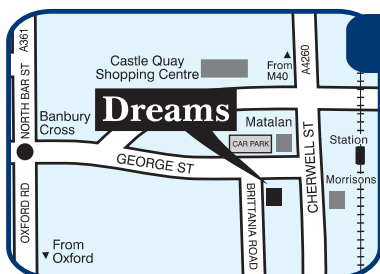


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Hanwell homes scheme would 'stand out like a sore thumb'

A LONG-AWAITED plan to build 350 homes in north Banbury has been submitted.

Pegasus Planning Group has applied for the homes on land north of Hanwell Fields, off Warwick Road, to Chertwell District Council.

The council has earmarked the land for up to 400 homes in its draft Local Plan – a policy blueprint for future developments over the coming two decades.

The firm said the land, north of

Dukes Meadow Drive, would help the council meet a Government housing target. All councils must maintain a supply of "deliverable houses" for the next five years, but Pegasus said this was just 3.1 years in Banbury.

The firm said the plan would be a "significant boost in the supply of deliverable housing land" and would "complement the local economy".

The site, which is accessed from Warwick Road, benefits from nearby jobs, schools and shops, it said.

Hanwell Fields Development Action Group, a residents' group opposed to the plan, said the application came as "no surprise".

Chairman Malcolm Finch said homes built there would "stand out like a sore thumb, dominating the view from both from the town and south from the village of Hanwell".

Dukes Meadow Drive is "already overused", he added.

He also hit out at plans for an unspecified number of new sports

pitches at the site. He said: "As we move forward with an ageing population, we do not want more sports pitches. There are more than enough."

Pegasus is seeking outline permission for the principle of the scheme and would need further permission for its detailed design.

The draft Local Plan proposes 3,369 homes for the Banbury area, including 400 west of Bretch Hill and 800 off Southam Road.

InBRIEF

Rail plan deferred

■ A DECISION on plans for a three-storey multi-storey car park at Banbury train station has been deferred by Chiltern District Council's planning committee. Planning officers had urged them to refuse the Chiltern Railways plan because of impact on traffic and neighbours. The committee meets again on January 31.

Turbine scheme

■ A PLANNING application has been submitted for a 55-metre-tall wind turbine north west of Middleton Cheney. South Northamptonshire Council will decide if the plan, involving land off Banbury Lane, should get the go-ahead. Chertwell District Council residents are being asked for their views as the site is close to the Oxfordshire boundary.

Test centre reply

■ DRIVING test centre chiefs have told Banbury MP Sir Tony Baldry that they are making every effort to stay in the town. The Conservative MP wrote to the Driving Standards Agency after "rumours" the West Bar Street centre would close in March. Agency chief executive Rosemary Thew said it was trying to extend the centre's lease, which expires on March 31. Other properties are being considered and she said: "I can assure you we are committed to continue to offer driving tests at Banbury."

Trees collection

■ ABOUT 15,000 Christmas trees will be picked up by recycling crews, Chertwell District Council estimates. Residents can leave the trees next to their brown bin.

■ More than 100 local yachting enthusiasts hope to sign up

Land-locked sailors to launch a new club

THE MAN planning Chipping Norton's first yacht club – more than 70 miles from the sea – says he is amazed by the number of people hoping to join.

Retired TV producer Trevor Taylor, 66, decided that living on one of the highest points in a completely land-locked county was no barrier to starting a group for sailing enthusiasts.

He said more than 100 people had expressed an interest in joining the Chipping Norton Yacht Club, which would organise a range of talks and social events, when it opens later this year.

Mr Taylor, from Spelsbury, said planning for the group was still in the early stages and it would be open to anyone with an interest in boating.

He said: "The idea has been around for a while but I have just recently discovered a number of people nearby who are interested."

"This is really quite surprising, given that we are so far inland. But just because we're miles from the coast doesn't mean we can't meet and have a bit of a natter."

"And even people without

By Oliver Evans

yachts, but who have an interest in sailing, can come along. Captains are always looking for crews."

He added: "Many Cotswold locals sail on the south, east and west coasts or overseas but, until now, there's been no local yacht club where those interested in boating can meet without having to embark on a two-hour journey to the Solent or longer to east or west coast ports."

The club is in contact with the Royal Yachting Association with a view to gaining membership and providing approved training courses.

Anyone interested in joining should visit cnyc.co.uk or email yachtbreeze@gmail.com



Trevor Taylor, who is setting up Chipping Norton Yacht Club. He is pictured with his nautical charts surrounded by the green fields of West Oxfordshire

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InCOURT

Reports from around the county's magistrates courts

■ **WILL BLENOWE**, 19, of Bodicote, Banbury, admitted assault by beating in Horsefair, Chipping Norton, on August 12. Given a 12-month conditional discharge.

■ **DARREN JAMES**, 31, of Tithe Court, Banbury, admitted shoplifting cat food and Strongbow worth £9.84 from Co-op in Banbury on August 19. Fined £73, a £15 victims' surcharge, and £40 costs.

■ **SEAN STIMPSON**, 44, of Penrhyn Close, Banbury, admitted being drunk and disorderly in Banbury on October 19. Handed a 12-month conditional discharge and told to pay £70 costs.

■ **JOHN ARGYLE**, 29, of Swalcliffe, admitted assault by beating in Banbury on July 25. Community order made with alcohol treatment and supervision requirement. Restraining order also made. Told to pay £40 costs.

■ **MIGUEL FERNANDEZ**, 65, of Brunswick Place, Banbury, admitted harassment after breaching a restraining order banning him from a property in Lapsley Drive, Banbury, on October 24. Given a six-month conditional discharge and restraining order extended for a further six months. Told to pay £85 costs.

Muslim leader in planning bid for new mosque

By Tom Jennings

A MOSQUE could be on its way to Chipping Norton. Tahirul Hasan, a Conservative member of Chipping Norton Town Council, hopes to convert a former shop in Hitchmans Mews, West Street, into a mosque.

The town's 30-strong muslim community currently worships in the Town Hall on Fridays, but Mr Hasan said it was not a sacred enough place for prayer.

The father-of-three said: "We need a permanent place and we need a place where there is no drinking or dancing, only peaceful prayer."

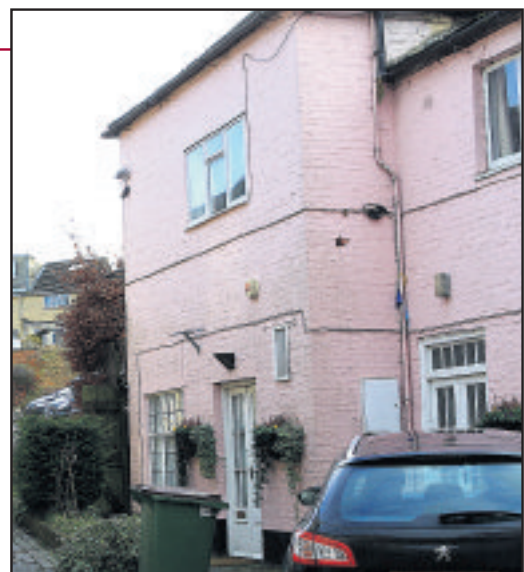
"We hope the new mosque will be a more sacred place."

If planning permission is granted, the new mosque will open between sunrise and one hour after sunset for prayers five times a day.

Mr Hasan said he did not plan to hold religious teaching and said the mosque would only be open for about ten minutes at a time for the prayers.

The 46-year-old added: "I have lived in Chipping Norton for 24 years and our group of muslims had to go to Banbury for their prayer."

"So, one day seven years



The former shop in Hitchmans Mews, West Street

ago, I decided to start Friday prayer and, after looking at every venue in the town, I found a place in the town hall."

The group now receives muslims from Moreton-in-Marsh, Woodstock and Witney and has up to 50 worshippers at a time.

Two years ago, Mr Hasan also started a Friday prayer group at Chipping Norton School for its eight muslim students.

Mr Hasan said it was important Chipping Norton had a mosque so that the

next generation of muslims did not lose touch with their identity.

He said: "Our children do not know what a mosque is because they have never seen one."

Canon Steve Weston, Team, rector of the Chipping Norton Benefice, said: "I think a mosque would fit in with Chipping Norton."

"We have a very tolerant community."

The district council will decide on the change of use planning application on a date yet to be set.



Tahirul Hasan

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■ Company rethinks controversial rail season ticket costs

Train firm cuts price rise after an outcry

CHILTERN Railways has cut a controversial 9.2 per cent rise in season tickets following an outcry.

The firm said it cut the increase to six per cent from Banbury and eight per cent from Bicester following public concern.

A 12-month season ticket from Banbury to London Marylebone was to rise from £5,476 to £5,976, it was announced on December 6.

But it revised increases before new fares came in on January 1 and the Banbury season ticket is now £5,800.

The Bicester 12-month season ticket is £5,140 instead of the planned 9.2 per cent increase to £5,196.

But First Great Western pressed ahead with a 4.2 per cent increase for London Paddington trains from Oxford and Didcot,

By Oliver Evans

boosting an annual ticket from £4,348 to £4,532.

Chiltern commercial director Thomas Ableman said: "In recognition of the strength of feeling, we have made changes to the planned increases."

He said: "We would much prefer not to increase any fares but the funding model for the rail industry is set by Government and we follow this in line with our franchise requirements."

Operators were allowed to increase regulated fares across their network by 4.2 per cent in the Chancellor's autumn statement.

But firms could vary individual fares from -0.8 per cent to 9.2 per cent as long as the average rise was 4.2 per cent.

Cherwell Rail Users Group chairman Chris



Chiltern Railways has reduced its originally proposed fare increases

Bates said: "We welcome their reaction to a rip-off pricing increase but it is still two per cent above the

Government required 4.2 per cent." Oxford East Labour MP Andrew Smith said: "They

are excessive to say the least are a time when a lot of people are on frozen or even reduced income."

Survey reveals patients' high praise for GPs

SATISFACTION with GP surgeries in Oxfordshire is above the national average, a Government survey has found.

The Department of Health's GP Patient Survey showed 96 per cent of those questioned had either a "good" or "very good" experience with their surgery.

Of the 11,712 people quizzed in Oxfordshire, 5,883 said they had a "very good" experience and 4,668 said they had a "good" experience.

The survey, which ran between January and September, found the national average was 82 per cent.

It also found 70 per cent (8,104 of 11,589) of Oxfordshire respondents had confidence and trust in their GP, compared to 65 per cent nationally.

Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group chief clinical officer Stephen Richards, said: "The patient survey is a well-respected indicator of how GP surgeries are performing. I am delighted to see that Oxfordshire is rated so highly across the board."

"It also helps us to see how our patients' expectations of the service we provide are changing and what areas would benefit from improvement."

"Questions around opening times show that 74 per cent of patients would like Saturday appointments, for example, and also that whilst currently only four per cent of people book appointments online, 36 per cent would prefer to do so using the Internet."

The group hopes to take these ideas forward to the NHS Commissioning Board, which is responsible for GP services.

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InBRIEF

Woman attacked

■ A NINETEEN-year-old woman was attacked by two men who stole her handbag, containing cash and makeup. The victim was punched, suffering a bloody nose, cut lip and bruising to her face and ribs. The mugging happened on Wednesday of last week at about 1pm in Hill View Crescent, Banbury. Police described the robbers as white men who did not have English accents. They were both described as pale, about 5ft 6in tall, with short blond hair. Call 101 with any information.

Appeal rejected

■ A BID to build a detached home in Hempton has been rejected on appeal. The Planning Inspectorate upheld Cherwell District Council's decision to refuse the plan for Snakehill Lane. Inspector Jane Miles said: "The proposed development would unacceptably diminish the existing and relatively spacious character of this edge of village location."

Poetry published

■ AN Oxfordshire teenager has had his work published in a young writers' poetry anthology. Xavier Ayub, 14, of Adderbury, was shortlisted as a finalist in the *Wicked Young Writers Awards*. His work, *Bottom's Dream*, features in a collective publication celebrating the award nominees. Of the 5,000 entries, the Magdalen College School pupil's work was one of 100 selected nationwide.

Infection report

■ NO new cases of Chalarra dieback have been found in Oxfordshire, the Forestry Commission has said. In November the county's first case was confirmed at the Kingsmere development outside Bicester. It led to more than 300 ash trees, which had been imported from Holland, being destroyed after 60 of them were found to be infected. But since then no further infected ash trees have been found.

Farming honour

■ The Upton Estate, near Banbury, has been honoured at a farming awards ceremony. The 2,000-acre estate was highly commended in the Champion Sustainable Farm category at the Farm Business Awards 2012.

Academy to press for the sale of playing field for homes

A HEADTEACHER is to visit sporting bosses in a bid to convince them to back plans to sell part of her school's playing field for homes.

Banbury Academy – formerly Banbury School – wants to sell part of the site for 50 homes to pay for new sporting facilities.

But Sport England objected to the plan, which was withdrawn before councillors were set to make a decision last September.

Principal Fiona Hammans said: "The plan hasn't changed. There is

nothing we should change in it. We know what we want.

"It is such a small bit of playing field. And they won't know that unless they look beyond the first page. We have another 13 acres of playing field.

"I hope we will be able to persuade them that our plan is not outrageous."

The scheme was withdrawn as the school was not confident it would get permission without Sport England's support, she said.

Sport England said it was "not

fully convinced" by the school's arguments that there would be enough playing pitches in Banbury.

The new homes would be near the former Stanbridge Hall and Springfield Avenue.

The £750,000 proceeds from the sale would have paid for an all-weather pitch and sports hall extension.

A 164-signature petition and six residents' letters opposed the plan, with concerns over extra noise, light, traffic and the loss of the field.



Banbury Academy principal Fiona Hammans

■ Out-of-school activity that won couple a national title

History teacher who is also a dance champion



2012 British Dance Sequence Champions Martin and Sarah Bird, who won the title at the Blackpool dance festival, are pictured with their dance pupils

BY day he is a mild-mannered head of history at Banbury Academy.

But at night – and weekends – Martin Bird is the king of the ballroom with his wife, Sarah.

Now the couple – who run a dance class at the former Banbury School – have won a top prize at Blackpool Sequence Dance Festival.

The couple met at trials for the Oxford University Dance Team as PhD students in 2006 and were soon hitting the floor across the UK.

Mr Bird, 33, of Albert Street, Banbury, said: "I just like dancing to the music and being able to express myself.

"Some of the pupils know. They don't always. Some are quite surprised."

He said the couple were thrilled to win the British Professional class at the resort's Empress Ballroom last month.

Mr Bird – who started aged ten – said: "It shows all the hard work we put in over the years to achieve."

By Oliver Evans

The success of TV's *Strictly Come Dancing* has led to a "a lot more interest" in ballroom dancing, he said, adding: "It's quite hard work but it is quite easy to pick up some of the steps. It is very enjoyable."

Mrs Bird, 29, said the accolade – which included dancing the two-step and tango – is the "very top one" and is their third professional event.

She said sequence dancing required a technical mastery similar to ballet as, unlike ballroom, the partners were not locked in a hold.

She said: "Martin was a very good dancer. I was really pleased to dance with him. He was the one to dance with."

"It makes a huge difference that you get on with your partner because you do so much stuff

together, all the travelling, competitions and lessons. You need to be able to work together very well.

"You have to trust your partner and they have to trust you. You have to look like you enjoy it. People can tell if you enjoy what you are doing."

Academy principal Fiona Hammans said: "We had our own *Strictly Come Banbury* a couple of years ago and Martin was the best dancer by far.

"He has had success as a dancer but is a fantastic teacher too.

"I think it was the staff who were more surprised. The students don't have preconceptions about what the teachers do."

Sibford Ferris public relations executive Jess Friend, 23, is among those who attend the couple's Wednesday night class.

She said: "He is really patient and dedicated. It is very warm and welcoming. I feel I have definitely been adopted by them all."

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■ Level crossing crash witnesses tell of desperate bid to save OAP

Tributes to rail victim



ABOVE: Police and railway workers at the scene of the crash
RIGHT: Victim Tom Pizzezy

PASSERS-BY tried desperately to save an 85-year-old man, who died after the car he was travelling in was hit by a freight train on a level crossing.

The death of Tom Pizzezy was said to have robbed Oxfordshire of a kind, gentle and generous man.

Those are the words of his family after the pensioner was killed at the Sandy Lane level crossing, near Yarnton.

British Transport Police thanked members of the public who tried in vain to save Mr Pizzezy on Wednesday of last week.

The 78-year-old driver of the car was left with relatively minor injuries after the crash but was still taken to hospital.

Mr Pizzezy's niece, Linda Mogford, said: "My uncle Tom was a kind, generous and gentle man and this incident has come as a great shock to all the family."

"We would like to thank everyone for their kind messages of support at this very difficult and sad time and extend our sympathies to those who knew Tom in Banbury."

"He will be greatly missed by his family and those who loved him."

The incident happened on the Sandy Lane line, between Yarnton and Kidlington, just before 3.40pm on Wednesday of last week, when a Freightliner train carrying shipping containers hit the blue Renault Kangoo.

Investigators examined the wreckage of the car and the mechanics of the half barrier crossing, but have yet to determine what caused the crash.

Detective Chief Inspector Simon Taylor said: "Detectives will be working tirelessly to establish the full circumstances into exactly what took place, including how the car came to be on the tracks."

Network Rail insisted the crossing barrier was safe prior to the crash, despite claims from residents that the barrier was frequently stuck down.

It also emerged that Kidlington police had assisted at the crossing several

By Mark Taylor

times in the last few months.

Local resident Wayne Tilling, said problems at the crossing had begun in November.

Mr Tilling, 42, said: "There was definitely a safety issue there, with the barriers staying down."

"I've been using that crossing for years and the barriers were definitely down longer than they used to be."

"I live near there and have seen drivers flagging others down to tell them that the crossing was stuck, and police have been out."

"I have contacted the signalman myself four or five times, having gone down there and found the barriers stuck."

He added he had seen drivers try to manoeuvre around the barriers – because they were down so long.

But Network Rail spokesman Sam Kelly said the crossing was working correctly.

She added: "Currently, we have no plans to install full barriers at this crossing. But reviewing safety at level crossings is an ongoing process."

"There have been three recorded incidents of misuse at the crossing and two near misses since April 2009."

"In comparison to other crossings this is very low."

But the organisation refused to give comparative figures for other level crossings in the area.

Thames Valley Police spokesman Rhianne Pope said the Kidlington Neighbourhood Team had attended the crossing to assist "a handful" of times recently to help out, but no further details were available.

A purpose-built speed camera van, designed to catch drivers attempting to beat the warning barriers, was due to be used at the crossing, but British Transport Police said it had not yet visited the site.



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InCOURT

■ JACOB HEADLEY, 37, of Newcombe Close, Milcombe, admitted drink-driving in New Road, Milcombe, on June 29. Had 75mg of alcohol in 100ml of breath, above the legal limit of 35mg. Fined £300, £15 victims' surcharge, £500 costs, and banned from driving for 40 months.

■ JUSTIN ROLLS, 36, of Jubilee Court, Banbury, admitted shoplifting a tablet computer worth £159 from HMV in Castle Quay, Banbury, on August 23 and again on August 24. Stole alcohol and meat worth £18 from Co-operative in Mewburn Road, Banbury, on August 15, and admitted theft by finding after stealing a cash tin worth £170 in Market Place, Banbury, on August 19. Also admitted

shoplifting meat worth £55 from Sainsbury's in Oxford Road, Banbury, on September 12 and stealing meat worth £39.64 from Morrisons in Banbury on September 14. Sent to prison for 14 days.

■ JASON GRAVES, 25, of Eady Road, Upper Heyford, admitted affray in Corn Street, Witney, on May 13. Banned from the Chequers pub and told to pay £50 costs.

■ MARK KIPPING, 33, of Newland Road, Banbury, admitted being drunk and disorderly in South Bar Street, Banbury, on November 17. Fined £100, £20 victims' surcharge, and £85 costs.

■ ANDREI PARASCANU, 25, of Ferndale Road, Banbury, admitted drink-driving in Warwick Road, Banbury, on

November 17. Had 55mg of alcohol in 100ml of breath, above the legal limit of 35mg. Also admitted driving without insurance. Fined £700, £35 victims' surcharge, and £85 costs. Banned from driving for 15 months.

■ MICHAEL BAGSHAW-WHEELER, 72, of Gillett Road, Banbury, convicted of exposing himself in South Bar Street, Banbury, on November 3. Given a 12-month conditional discharge.

■ LEISHA KANE, 27, of Duke Street, Banbury, admitted using threatening words or behaviour to cause harassment, alarm or distress in South Bar Street, Banbury, on November 3. Fined £75, a £20 victims' surcharge, and £85 costs.

■ RICHARD MCGUIGAN, 22, of Cromwell Road, Banbury,

admitted assault by beating in Denbigh Close, Banbury, on September 26. Community order made with activity, programme and supervision requirements. Restraining order also made. Told to pay £100 compensation and £85 costs.

■ JAMES CURTIS, 23, of Burford Road, Chipping Norton, admitted shoplifting a case of Fosters lager worth £10.65 from Co-op in High Street, Chipping Norton, on September 13. Also admitted shoplifting a bottle of Dr Pepper and a pack of crisps worth £2 from Co-op in High Street, Chipping Norton, on September 18. Fined £50, told to pay a total of £12.65 compensation, a £15 victims' surcharge, and £20 costs.

Cases from around the county's magistrates courts



Where cuts will fall

By Freddie Whittaker

A COUNCIL tax rise, 24-hour park and ride charges and a further £18m cut to the adult social care budget have been announced by County Hall.

The county revealed details of how its £46m of extra savings over the next four years would be achieved.

Almost half the savings - needed as a result of the 12 per cent cut in the council's share of business rates - will be met in the 2013 to 2014 financial year.

Council tax will rise by 1.99 per cent, just shy of the two per cent ceiling imposed by Government - which councils can't breach without a referendum.

The council says that £800,000 will be stripped

How county council plans to save £46m

from its children's centre budget, but vowed none of the 44 centres would close.

And it said money used by councillors to fund road projects in their areas would be scrapped from 2014 to save just over £1m. The highways pot has been used to fund schemes, such as zebra crossings.

County council leader Ian Hudspeth said many of the extra savings in adult social care were being achieved through different ways of

working with the NHS, and claimed the council would avoid redundancies where possible.

And the 11 hours of free parking at Oxford's Thornhill and Water Eaton park-and-ride sites will be scrapped, generating an extra £250,000 a year in income.

Parking at the two sites has been free since 2005, but last year long-stay charges of £3 per 24 hours were introduced.

Opposition group leader, Lib Dem Zoe Patrick accepted the

council faced difficult cuts, and said the group would be scrutinising the Tories' suggestions.

She said: "Unfortunately the biggest hit is going to be in adult social care, but we always knew that's where the pressures



County council opposition group leader Zoe Patrick

would be. It is going to be a hard task. The settlement from central Government was not a good one, and we can't put up council tax any higher than two per cent without having a referendum, which would be pointless because nobody's going to vote for an increase in council tax."

Labour group leader Liz Brighouse blamed central Government for the extra cuts and accused them of trying to get rid of "one of the cornerstones of British democracy".

She said: "The council obviously has to make these cuts because central Government is proposing them. Young people, old people,

anyone who depends on the services of the county council is going to be affected.

"Local authorities are between a rock and a hard place and the Lib Dems and Tories in Government have completely abandoned local Government."

"They should just come out and say they're abolishing local Government, because that's what they're doing by stealth."

Proposed savings totalling £119m were announced in late 2010 and so far £92m has been saved. The council had intended to save a further £27m by 2015, but had to extend the timeframe of its savings after the Government settlement was announced.

The budget bullet points

- Council tax to rise by 1.99 per cent, equivalent to £23 per year or 44p per week for a band D household
- Savings of £73m, amounting to 7.5 per cent of the council's budget of more than £900m, will be met by 2017
- Extra savings of more than £18m in adult social care budgets
- Savings of £0.8m in management of children's centres from 2014, although none will close
- Daytime parking charges to be introduced at Oxford's Water Eaton and Thornhill park-and-ride sites

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Mum runs to help hospital

A MUM whose premature baby was cared for by Oxford's Children's Hospital is joining a charity run to support them.

Mum-of-two Julia Spargo said joining the OX5 charity run for the Headington hospital was the least she could do after all the help they have given to her daughter Beth.

The five-mile Blenheim Palace run on March 10 raises cash for children's treatment at the hospital. One-year-old daughter Beth was born with a cleft palate, dislocated hips and respiratory problems. At two weeks old, she was moved to the hospital's special care baby unit for treatment where she underwent scans and an operation.

By Katriona Ormiston

The North Oxfordshire resident said: "We had no idea there was anything wrong, so it all came as a huge shock."

"When you have a sick baby everything changes. We'd already had some first-hand experience of the hospital when our three-year-old Amalia had surgery for a duplex kidney, but in those first few months with Beth normal life went out the window."

"Until you are part of the community that use the children's hospital, you do not appreciate how long some babies and children have to spend in hospital."

"Nor do you realise just how

many of the homely facilities and pioneering pieces of medical equipment have been paid for through fundraising and donations."

"Beth has taken every medical intervention, scan, operation, examination and appointment with a loud protest and a cheeky grin. Running five miles around the beautiful grounds of Blenheim is the least

I can do." Ms Spargo said she took on the challenge last year after Beth was born. She added: "We heard about the OX5 Run last year when Beth was just a few weeks old and we still didn't really know what her future held."

"Life was chaotic, but I ran out of gratitude to the hospital staff and because I wanted to give something back."

"This year, I am running again because the children's hospital remains a big part of our world and we want to celebrate how far we have come with Beth. She can now breathe independently and she has just this week started to make speech sounds."

In 2012, the OX5 charity run, which is supported by the Banbury Cake's sister paper the

Oxford Mail and sponsored by Allen Associates, raised £60,000.

A spokesman for the children's hospital Sarah Vaccari said: "I am delighted that Julia is once again taking part in the OX5 Run and it is wonderful to hear that Beth is doing so well."

To enter the race, go to oxfordmail.co.uk/news/ox5run, or call 01865 743444.

OX5 RUN



Mother Julia Spargo with her baby daughter, Beth

5 mile run Blenheim Palace Sunday, March 10, 2013

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(min 5 runners)
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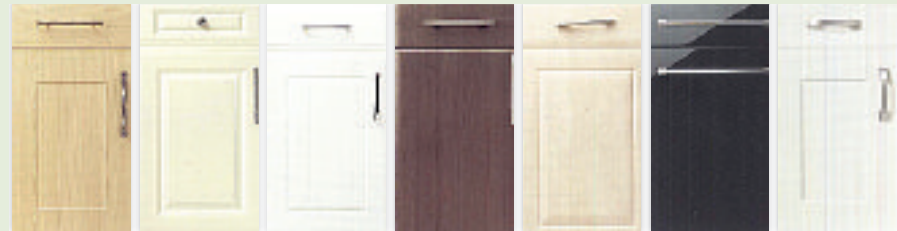
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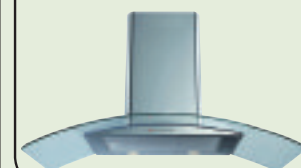


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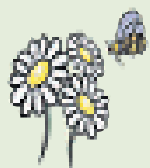
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Fiddler foursome take a bow

WHEN fiddle player Bella Hardy was asked if she wanted to join forces with three other formidable folk musicians and form a group, she didn't think twice.

The artists in question happened to be among the best of the new crop of artists and, more importantly, they sounded amazing together.

What neither she, nor the musician Kathryn Tickell whose idea it was, had realised, however, was that they had a lot more in common than simply a love of folk music. For a start they were all women, they all played the fiddle and all sang.

What was initially intended to be just a pair of concerts has proved enduring. She and her bandmates: double Mercury Prize nominee Eliza Carthy; haunting singer-songwriter Lucy Farrell and Scottish folk pioneer Kate Young; have bonded as probably the hottest sounding band you'll hear all year.

"We are called the Fiddle Girls, for obvious reasons," laughs Bella, speaking from the wilds of Cumbria, where she has been recording.

"We were commissioned as just a random bunch of folk girls; but what they didn't realise was we were also all fiddle players and singers. None of us had played together, though.

"We ended up doing 10 songs together; all stuff we'd never done before. Until we got into a room and played together we didn't know how much fun it would be. We knew it would be a shame not to do more and we thought it would be daft not to record a record."

Arwen Arabella Hardy sums up all that is exciting about the folk scene right now. An acclaimed multi-instrumentalist, she is immersed in the rich communal singing tradition of her native Derbyshire Peak

By Tim Hughes

District; the same musical culture which nurtured that other great Pennine folk star, South Yorkshire's Kate Rusby.

A finalist in the BBC Young Folk Awards in 2004, Bella's debut solo album *Night Visiting* again pricked up the ears of folkies three years later. Her subtle blend of traditional and original music has seen her nominated four times in the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards – and winning the Best Original Song Award in 2012 for *The Herring Girl*.

But while she may be a talented a solo performer, it is the prospect of playing with her three bandmates – and the forthcoming release of the Fiddle Girls' debut album *Laylam*, which is making her most excited. And for good reason.

"We are all so miserable and as mischievously, she says: "Not really... but we are slightly eccentric ladies; we are an absolute hoot!"

So with all that talent in one band, is there pressure to outperform each other? "Not at all," says Bella, who describes herself as being in her early 20s. "We have nothing to hide. As a musician you have to learn early on that you can't compare yourselves to other people otherwise you'd go mad. So none of us do; we are not in competition."

"We are all quite different people but when we are together there's a whole cacophony of ideas that come together – and that is more interesting than being on our own. This is a whole different take on what I would normally do and it's so good for everybody to have the audience respond to songs so enthusiastically. We are not preaching to the converted. Something I think is



important is we do the music we want to do and enjoy it. And if other people want to explore folk music with us, that's fine.

"One of the interesting things is we all go for it. It's easy to whip up some chemistry and have a bit of a laugh – and we certainly enjoy ourselves. We are having a fantastic time and having so much fun in the back of our van."

A tour to accompany the release of *Laylam* sees the girls play shows in Chipping Norton and Didcot. And while Bella is thrilled by both dates, it is the first which has significance. "I lived in Charlbury for the first six months of my life," she says.

Her father Joe, a former Charlbury Morris man, looked after the town's youth hostel, before moving to Edale.

"This will be like a homecoming," she laughs. "I really can't wait."

Certainly folk seems to be in a healthy state, if Bella and the rest of the Fiddle Girls' success is anything to go by. Bella agrees. "Folk seems to be thriving and there's a huge wealth of great music – and it's wonderful to be part of that."

■ **The Fiddle Girls play Chipping Norton Theatre on January 27. Call 01608 642350 or visit chippingnortontheatre.co.uk**



CHEMISTRY: The Fiddle Girls and, left, Bella Hardy

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A creative start to the year

■ A HOST of arts and crafts classes is under way in the new term at Banbury's Mill Arts Centre.

The programme offers a variety of enjoyable, instructive sessions from painting and drawing to textiles, creative writing, singing and even deep relaxation.

Mixed-ability painting and drawing classes with Chrissie Borland take place on Mondays and Tuesdays. Participants are helped to find their own style through experimenting with different media.

Sue Green returns, teaching the fascinating subject of textiles in art for beginners and mixed abilities at various times every Thursday.

All kinds of stitching, printing, couching and ink effects are explored. Ms Green also runs a

creative crafts class allowing experimentation with techniques.

Singing and Tango dancing are two specialities of charismatic performer Patrissia Cuberos who teaches Singing for the Terrified and Songthreads for those who want to sing in an encouraging environment. Her tango classes are targeted towards beginners and improvers and are held on Saturdays.

Matthew Sullivan will run a new term of guitar classes for beginners and improvers on Wednesdays while author Meg Harper runs a Thursday session, *Write That Novel!* as well as her monthly creative writing class.

Professional-level digital photography comes courtesy of the experienced Becky Moyce and

Tina Burnett's specialist deep relaxation sessions will deal with tension and stress.

Call The Mill on 01295 279002.

■ **THEATRE-GOERS** off to see *Jack and the Beanstalk* can enjoy a visual journey through the panto's production.

The arts centre's foyer gallery features a photographic record of Cherwell Theatre Company's (CTC) rehearsals right up to the dress rehearsals in the theatre.

The pictures have been taken by Oxford and Cherwell Valley photography graduate Laura Boffin, 21, and 19-year-old Millie Braviner. The exhibition, called *Something Big's Coming to Town* can be seen during normal Mill opening hours. Entry is free.

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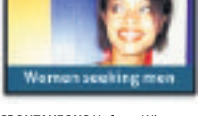
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START LIVING AGAIN Friendly, fun Oxfordshire divorced mum, 51, 5'7", grown up children, looking for love again and someone to share life with, Is the right man out there for me? Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 798804

SEARCHING FOR YOU Down to earth, Mauritius-born Devices female, 51, looking for someone for a serious relationship, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 120023 or send a text to 80360

BETTER WITH 2 Easygoing Chipping Norton female, 52, enjoys life to the full, swimming, walking my dog, seeking a kind, caring male, to enjoy life with, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 134536

SOMEONE EXACTLY LIKE YOU Caring, lovely, bubbly Bicester lady, 53, looking for a tall, kind, caring and romantic man for a lasting loving relationship, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 118921 or send a text to 80360

I'LL TREAT YOU RIGHT Sincere Swindon woman, 54, GSOH, fun, outgoing, lively, loves nights out, socialising and music, seeks a friendly bloke, to share lots of good times and more, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 104377 or send a text to 80360

THAT SPECIAL PERSON Honest, bubbly female, 55, kind, loving, seeks 6ft+ male, for romance, companionship & lots more. Bicester, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 110670

SHALL WE DANCE? Blondest, blue-eyed Swindon lady, 56, friendly nature, well-travelled and loyal, lover of life, searching for an active, educated man, who appreciates, good, wine and life in general, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 110895

RECIPE FOR LOVE Kind hearted, sociable Oxford lady, 57, active, caring, GSOH, enjoys rock concerts, seaside, animals and driving, searching for a warm, loving and funny gent, for company, sharing and maybe more, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 130132 or send a text to 80360

MEANINGFUL TIMES Active, outgoing Trowbridge female, 57, loves cinema, seaside, travelling and animals, would like to meet a man for company leading to a possible relationship, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 117215

FIRENDS FIRST Intelligent, attractive Wiltshire female, 57, widow, brunette, 5'2", likes radio 4, reading, travel, art galleries and gym, new to area and seeking a similar guy, GSOH, for company and more, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 124892 or send a text to 80360

THE BETTER THINGS IN LIFE Divorced Swindon female, 65, 5'5", works part-time, likes walking, travelling and cooking, would like to meet a nice sociable gent, with a good lifestyle, to enjoy life with, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 114628

HONEST RELATIONSHIP Gentle, 65, 5'5", slim-build, blue-eyes with a positive outlook, enjoy countryside, dancing, music, theatre, seeking a gent, 63-68, to enjoy similar interest, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 128404 or send a text to 80360

SO HAPPY TOGETHER Loving, single and active lady, 66, cuddly, would like to meet a gent who likes country walks, meals out, social drinks and places of interest for companionship, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 114914

DOWN TO EARTH Happy-go-lucky Swindon female, young 71, loves walks, cooking, gardening, kisses, cuddles, looking for a N/S, clean-shaven man, for a loving relationship, Last caller please leave contact number, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 454288

ADVENTURE AHEAD Warm, friendly Wiltshire woman, 71, GSOH, youthful, attractive, likes dancing, walking, music, theatre, reading and meals out, seeking a tall, active and fun gentleman, for company and more, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 123234

GREAT COMPANIONS Wiltshire widow, 73, likes music, theatre, travel and more, searching an easygoing gent, for companionship, friendship and maybe more, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 104917

NEW PASTURES Friendly, happy Swindon lady, 74, looking for a cheerful, kind gent, who knows how to treat a lady and enjoy some good times together, Are you the one? Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 133285 or send a text to 80360

NICE TO BE WITH Young-minded, retired Chippenham lady, 78, 5'7", cuddly-build, likes crosswords, holidays, home life, seeking a nice gent, to share good company together, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 128540 or send a text to 80360

GREAT COMPANIONS Active, caring Trowbridge lady, 82, likes countryside, animals, travel home and abroad, seeking an honest, non-smoking gent, 75-80+, for friendship, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 136338

LOVE IS FOR SHARING Easygoing, sincere Trowbridge lady, 60, med build, 5'6", GSOH, N/S, enjoys good socialising, sports, music, walking and reading, searching for that special guy, N/S and caring for dates & more, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 116611

GENUINE AND CARING Oxfordshire widow, 61, 5'6", slender build, sociable, caring and well-travelled, searching for a genuine, professional guy, non-smoker, for friendship, maybe lasting love, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 466487

KNOW WHAT MATTERS Upbeat, cultured, sophisticated Banbury lady, 62, own house and car, likes swimming and wondering about the countryside, would like to meet an up-lifting man, to fill in the gaps, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 123403 or send a text to 80360

LISTEN TO YOUR HEART Happy go lucky Warmistone female, 62, looking for a nice kind and reliable man to share good times together and more, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 120544

SOCIABLE SORT Tall, blonde Wiltshire girl, 62, enjoys cars, walks, gardening and more, searching for a sociable man, with an active lifestyle, for a loving and lasting relationship, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 452750

FRIENDSHIP, MAYBE MORE... Sociable, active Witney woman, 63, GSOH, widow, attractive, likes meeting people, theatre, drinks, meals out and walking, seeking a similar man, caring and genuine, for friendship and maybe more, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 127066

READY TO MEET MY SOULMATE Outgoing, sociable Oxford male, 41, black, GSOH, caring, enjoys living life to the full and would like to share it with a lovely, attractive and kind female, for a loving relationship, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 127095

PERFECT HARMONY Fun-loving, easygoing, tactile Witney biker, 41, 6ft, stocky build, shaven head and goatee, seeks loving, cheeky lady to share life with, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 108035 or send a text to 80360

UNDER THE SKY Flexible, warm and easygoing Faringdon gent, 50, wants to meet an energetic, tactile female, for fun and maybe a little romance, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 136213 or send a text to 80360

GET TO THE GOOD TIMES Separated, laid-back Bicester guy, 50, 5'10", brown hair/blue eyes, decent build, self-employed, looking for an attractive woman, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 136282 or send a text to 80360

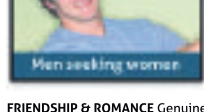
TIME FOR A CHANGE Friendly, expressive and vibrant Kidlington male, 51, would like to meet a life-loving, interesting lady, to share the future together, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 114479

ACCEPT EACH OTHER Easygoing Wantage male, 51, own car, works full-time, likes most sports, would like to meet an outgoing female, for good times leading to more, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 135164 or send a text to 80360

ALL TO LOVE Kind and caring Oxfordshire male, 52, brown hair, green eyes, GSOH, searching for a nice, genuine girl, for friendship first, then maybe more, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 461278

ETERNAL COMPANIONSHIP Outgoing, divorced Witney male, 52, pubs, meals, nice walks, family life, seeking an interesting woman, to get to know better, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 126741 or send a text to 80360

LET'S DO IT Upbeat, friendly man, 53, good sense of humour, into most things, travelling, good foods, looking for love and romance, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 110840



FRIENDSHIP & ROMANCE Genuine, active Oxford male, 28, slim build, 5'7", caring, enjoys the gym, cycling and generally keeping fit, would like to meet a similar female, honest, GSOH and fun, for friendship and love, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 122941

SHARE SOME TIME Adaptable, upbeat and optimistic Oxford man, 32, would like to find a warm, laid-back girl, for good times and great company, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 134837 or send a text to 80360

WE COULD BE GOOD TOGETHER Down to earth Swindon male, 37, enjoys cycling, walks, travel and lots more, seeks laid back female, for good times and more, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 100773

TIME TO SHARE Lively Oxford male, 39, 5'10", med build, enjoys motorbikes, clubs, cinema, meals and more, searching for a loving woman, to share friendship and more, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 117999 or send a text to 80360

LOVE TO HAVE A LAUGH Hardworking Oxford male, 50, 5'7", brown hair, own flat, likes socialising, cooking, nights in, seeks nice young lady for friendship leading to more, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 121027 or send a text to 80360

LOVE TO HAVE A LAUGH Friendly, warm hearted Abingdon male, 50, good sense of humour, would like to meet a caring matured guy, to enjoy good times together, for a long term relationship, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 115894

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TAKE HANDS Slim, tall Oxfordshire male, 43, N/S, musician and artist, searching for his perfect woman, to make life complete, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 180816

ENJOY GOOD COMPANY Honest male, 44, 6'3", stocky build, gosh, enjoys sports, travel, cooys love in, social drinks, seeks fun loving female, for happy times, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 101716 or send a text to 80360

SHARE THE MOMENT Friendly, lovely and sincere Oxford gent, 44, 5'10", wants to meet a homely, sensible woman, for good times and great company, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 134382 or send a text to 80360

LIFE IS MADE FOR TWO Happy, active Abingdon man, 46, GSOH, med build, positive, enjoys walking, swimming and cinema, would like to meet a similar lady, 50-65, fit and positive, for friendship and maybe more, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 114348 or send a text to 80360

WE CAN BE HAPPY Fun male, 44, likes meals out, keeping fit, weekends away, 5ft9in, seeking friendship maybe more with someone special, Banbury, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 854670

IT'S NOT UNUSUAL Friendly Witney male, 48, 6'3", blue eyes, enjoys sports, music, cooys nights in, going out and having a laugh, would like to meet a female friend, for good company and laughter, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 115039 or send a text to 80360

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LET'S DO IT Upbeat, friendly man, 53, good sense of humour, into most things, travelling, good foods, looking for love and romance, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 110840

NOT TO BE MISSED Spontaneous, caring, hard-working Oxford guy, 54, likes music, cooking, live bands, good wine and F1, would like to meet a simple woman, to share life with, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 115773 or send a text to 80360

TAKE CHARGE Bright, humorous and optimistic Banbury man, 55, would like a date with a chatty, active woman, for good times and great company, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 103860 or send a text to 80360

A FUTURE FILLED WITH LAUGHTER Divorced, young at heart male, 56, own house in Oxford, likes cinema, theatre and clubs, seeks caring female for happy times and more, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 107632

HOPING FOR MORE Fit, slim-built Watlington male, 57, likes swimming, keeping fit, animals, would like to meet a nice, loving, caring lady, to share life with, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 134615 or send a text to 80360

CARING NATURE Articulate, vigorous and astute Witney man, 58, looking for a funny, innovative woman, for friendship and romance, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 111595

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SO GOOD TOGETHER Genuine, easygoing, happy Abingdon male, 61, own home/car, enjoys dancing, golf and walking the dog, searching for a genuine lady, with an attractive and happy nature, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 466085

POSITIVE ATTITUDE Fit Latino male, 61, looking for someone who can share fun, life in general and hopefully love with, Oxford, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 460522

READY TO MOVE ON Young, caring Didcot guy, 63, 5'9", enjoys the sea, reading and boating, would like to meet a similar lady for companionship, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 117043 or send a text to 80360

MORE IN TIME Self-employed Witney male, 64, loves cinema, theatre, eating out and more, searching for a serious-minded lady, for a loving and supportive relationship, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 109413 or send a text to 80360

MAKE A FRIEND Warm, romantic Bicester male, 65, searching for an interesting, active woman, for days out, friendship, meals and good company, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 851123

HOPE THIS WORKS Cuddly Swindon lady, 47, easygoing and fun to be with, looking for friendship leading to more with a nice, friendly, bubbly woman, Where are you? Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 851817 or send a text to 80360

BE THERE FOR ME Honest, caring Wiltshire woman seeking women, only for social outings travel etc, anywhere, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 113955

LUCKY CHARM Serious, lovable and imaginative Malmesbury lady, 54, simply searching for an independent, free-thinking girl, for a special and lasting relationship, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 134242 or send a text to 80360

PUTTING THE SPARK BACK Easygoing, stocky built Oxford guy, 49, blue eyes, likes pubs, cinema, the arts, looking for a similar man 35-60, for companionship and hopefully we'll see where it leads to, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 103263 or send a text to 80360

KING OF MY HEART Lively, confident Oxford male, 54, would like to meet a mature, active male, for good times and more, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 135675 or send a text to 80360

MAKE A CONNECTION Interesting, friendly Oxford male, 64, varied interests, loves walks, reading, travel and more, seeks sensible male, similar age, for a loving relationship, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 857624

THAT'S ALL FOR NOW... Easygoing, friendly Didcot male, 65, enjoys walks, theatre, cosy times in, socialising, seeks a friendly, active chap, for company and more, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 131890 or send a text to 80360

LET'S EXPLORE Abingdon male, 69, 5'9", medium build, easygoing and affectionate, looking for someone similar, to share fun and good times, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 453567 or send a text to 80360

RARE DISCOVERY Easygoing Thame widower, 67, medium-build, likes gardening, playing golf, the outdoors, would like to meet a nice lady, for a lasting relationship, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 134196

THE BEST IS YET TO BE Caring, romantic Bicester male, 60, works full-time, loves weekend away, car boot sales and walking, looking for a lady 48-55 to share life and love with, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 118655

OF A GENUINE DESCRIPTION Fit, clean-shaven Thame gentleman, 67, easygoing, 6ft, active, enjoys gardening, golf, and the outdoors, seeking a similar lady, affectionate and fun, for friendship and hopefully love, Call 0905 005 2359 and enter box number 126173

The Boxing Day tsunami horror is brought to life

THE IMPOSSIBLE (12A, 114 mins)
Thriller/Action/Romance. Naomi Watts, Ewan McGregor, Tom Holland, Samuel Joslin, Oaklee Pendergast, Dominic Power, Geraldine Chaplin. Director: Juan Antonio Bayona.

Mother Nature is a cruel mistress. She can nurture and nourish, and conjure new life in the most desolate regions, yet she can also destroy without warning or mercy.

On December 26, 2004, while many in the West were bloated with post-Christmas excess, communities across southern Asia faced unimaginable devastation.

An earthquake off the coast of northern Sumatra displaced huge volumes of water, resulting in a massive tsunami that ripped through the region, razing lush wilderness and luxury resorts packed with vacationing families.

Thousands of people were killed and many more were left homeless by a wall of roaring, churning water.

"This is the true story of one of those families," declares *The Impossible*, a harrowing drama about five people caught up in the disaster, who mustered formidable strength and courage to search for each other amid scenes of heartbreaking loss.

Adapted by screenwriter Sergio G Sanchez from the nightmarish recollections of survivors Maria and Enrique Belon, Juan Antonio Bayona's film packs a mighty emotional punch with every

expertly crafted frame.

There but for the grace of God and Mother Nature go all of us.

Henry (Ewan McGregor) and Maria (Naomi Watts) arrive in the tropical paradise of Thailand with their three sons, Lucas (Tom Holland), Thomas (Samuel Joslin) and Simon (Oaklee Pendergast).

They open Christmas presents on the patio overlooking the sea, unaware of the horror to come.

The following day, flocks of terrified birds take to the skies, heralding a wall of water that careens through the complex.

Maria and Lucas are carried away by the surge and when the water eventually recedes, they hobble through mud and detritus in search of survivors.

Meanwhile, Henry is forced to leave his two youngest boys in the care of strangers in order to learn the fate of his wife and eldest child.

"I've never looked after anyone before. I'm scared," pleads seven-year-old Thomas, to no avail.

Directed with aplomb by Bayona, *The Impossible* recreates the tsunami using giant water tanks to drench the lead cast, augmented with digital effects that give a sense of the confusion and terror that fateful winter's day.

Watts wrings out copious tears as a critically-ill mother who puts on a brave face in front of her terrified boy.

McGregor has the less showy role but still tugs heartstrings with an anguished telephone call back home to distraught relatives, his voice cracking with every shell-



Naomi Watts in a scene from the film *The Impossible*

shocked word.

Teenage newcomer Holland impresses most, bearing the emotional weight of deeply moving scenes as if he has been acting all of his life.

He doesn't strike a false note as the camera stares unflinchingly into his bloodshot eyes.

Staring back is a boy forced to make life-or-death decisions in order to cast aside childish things in order to make life-or-death decisions that could leave him orphaned in a foreign land.

CakeWhat's on

Cinema

Odeon, Horsefair, Banbury: Call cinema for information. Box office: 0871 224 4007.

Theatre

The Mill Arts Centre, Spiceball Park, Banbury:

*Until Jan 20, **Jacked and the Beanstalk**, Presented by community-based Cherwell Theatre Company. Something big is coming to town! Get a grip of your giggles, if you can, when you meet our extra larger than life characters: the fun-loving Fairy, the dainty Dame, the whacky, wicked Witch, the hot-headed Hero, the uncommonly courteous Cow and of course, the ginormous Giant. Theatricality, creativity and energy and with all the magic of a traditional pantomime; packed with jokes, slapstick comedy and loveable characters. Someone has to get in the Giant's way, unfortunately, and much to his delight, everybody does! Except the village Fool... Tickets £10, concession £8, family £32.*

Box office: 01295 279002.

The Theatre, Spring Street, Chipping Norton:

Jan 17, stand-up comedy-Cotswold Comedy Club. Box office: 01608 642350.

RSC Theatre, Waterside, Stratford:

Until Jan 12 2013 *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Den Dobson Barrit as Falstaff and Anita Dombson as Mistress Quickly. From £14. Box office: 0844 800 1110 Mon-Sat 10am-6pm.

Oxford Playhouse, Beaumont Street, Oxford:

Until Jan 13, *Dick Whittington*. London's streets of gold are calling and, with his faithful cat by his side, our hero Dick goes searching for his fortune. Be there to cheer Dick on along his journey, 'boo' at the biggest baddie of all time - King Rat - and 'ahh' at the object of Dick's affections, the beautiful Alice. Packed full of fabulous tunes, stunning dancing plus lots of festive sparkle and chances to join in. Written and directed by Peter Duncan. Tickets £12.50-£23.

Jan 17, National Youth Jazz Orchestra, returning to the Playhouse following previous sell-out visits to provide an uplifting evening's entertainment, celebrating the jazz big band sound. A showcase for the country's best young musicians destined to become the next UK jazz generation. Alumni include Guy Barker, Dennis Rollins, Julian Arguelles, Amy Winehouse and Chris Dagley. £16, concession £14. 7.30pm. Box office: 01865 305305.

Events

SATURDAY

Walk (ramblers): In the Otmoor area. Meet RSPB car park (SP569125), Beckley. 10am. Leisurely five-mile leads in the area. Dogs on short leads please. 07527758788.

WEDNESDAY

Tai Chi taster: Hanwell Fields Community Centre, Rotary Way, Banbury. Great for reducing stress. 10am-11am. Free. 01295 720881.

STARS with Claire Petulengro

Service provided by IMS Leeds LS1 8LB. Calls cost 60p per minute at all times



ARIES

Mar 21-Apr 19

Your element of fire sees your temper going into overdrive at the weekend which may see you with a lot of apologising to do on Monday, so keep it in check. Where there's a will there is a way when faced with impossible tasks. News of a loved one offers reason to celebrate. Push for more in work, you hold the power to ensure change happens. Call me now to reveal just what your future holds.

0906 585 4360

LIBRA

Sep 23-Oct 22

Questions are being asked and decisions are being made. You may not be one hundred per cent sure what to do but the planets suggest you didn't have any more time to think on things. News on travel is your green light for you to announce any changes which you're making. It's when you'll get the backing of those who really count for you. Call now to hear how past and present mix well.

0906 585 4366

TAURUS

Apr 20-May 20

An argument which you've had can be diffused if you offer an olive branch before Thursday and not via a third party either Taurus. If you've committed to something in business then make sure you deliver. Not only does your reputation depend on it but so do your finances. Aries offer you a break from the norm socially. Call me now for exciting new avenues in your career.

0906 585 4361

SCORPIO

Oct 23-Nov 21

Promises you make may not be as easy as you think for you to cope with, so try to make loose arrangements. You'll see why by Friday. Family prove hard work and you may have trouble getting used to the idea that a younger face has thrown into the melting pot. Don't judge until you've heard all and not just half of the story. Phone now for a full reading on life and love.

0906 585 4367

GEMINI

May 21-Jun 20

Work and career matters get really interesting and you start to see something which you've learned about their situation. Being a fire sign though, it could well prove impossible for you not to tell them. Putting a little thought into your delivery could be the answer. Education links from Wednesday hold the key to your making serious money. Ring now to look at your future.

0906 585 4362

SAGITTARIUS

Nov 22-Dec 21

It may be hard for you to know if you should tell a friend something which you've learned about their situation. Being a fire sign though, it could well prove impossible for you not to tell them. Putting a little thought into your delivery could be the answer. Education links from Wednesday hold the key to your making serious money. Ring now to look at your future.

0906 585 4368

CANCER

Jun 21-Jul 22

The Moon makes it hard for you to give in to your family's needs or, as some would say, emotional blackmail. Just make sure you set a mark as to how far you'll go. You'll think that you cannot trust new faces you've met but they are actually likely to help not hinder your career. Children evolve and give you reason to loosen the reins. Call to find out how you can push for more in love.

0906 585 4363

CAPRICORN

Dec 22-Jan 19

Why are you asking the advice of those whose lives you wouldn't want for your own? Surely it is far better to take responsibility yourself? I believe in you Capricorn and you must try to find the faith to think what and who makes you happy. The chance to go somewhere you've never been before this week is the key to your confidence. Call now to review your options.

0906 585 4369

LEO

Jul 23-Aug 22

A better understanding of what your close ones are willing to give you helps you feel more at ease in your every day life. Try not to use the past as an excuse for a mistake you've made. Your loved ones respect you and know you're not stupid. Try not to cast yourself in a role you know you cannot play. Call now to hear how the planets back you for success.

0906 585 4364

AQUARIUS

Jan 20-Feb 18

Work is your main priority this week, or rather finding ways of making yours pay more. It could well be to your advantage to shop around and to invest in some travel as your stars show that you're a social sign who has lost a lot of confidence due to recent events and could really do with spreading your wings. Ring me now to hear how Mercury is on hand to aid your journey.

0906 585 4370

VIRGO

Aug 23-Sep 22

Mixed messages you're getting in love are making it hard for you to know what your next move should be. Just be yourself and you'll soon find out if the right person is around. Encouraging a relationship which was destructive could again be your downfall. Love should work for both, not just one. Call now for a confidence boost.

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PISCES

Feb 19-Mar 20

Difficult faces in business are making it hard for you to know if you're in the wrong or right. Aspects suggest that either way you're already committed so stand by what you've done or you'll only cast yourself as unprofessional. Good news comes your way on Thursday via an email or text. Give me a call now to hear why it's worth giving your family an unexpected call this weekend.

0906 585 4371

CakeSport

banburycake.co.uk/sport

Towers halts a home run

BANBURY United's run of five successive home wins came to an abrupt halt with defeat by Barwell in the Premier Division at the Spencer Stadium.

Two goals in the first 11 minutes from Jamie Towers put Barwell firmly in control.

The first came after six minutes when the ball was pumped into the middle from the right, and with Banbury failing to clear, Towers fired home from 12 yards.

Five minutes later it was 2-0 when a long ball down the middle caught out the Banbury defence, and Towers slotted past Lewis Kidd.

Banbury Utd (Martin 43)	1
Barwell (Towers 6,11)	2

After struggling to make an impact for much of the half, Banbury clawed their way back into the game two minutes before the interval.

A move down the left, involving Adeyinka Talabi and Nabil Sharif, ended with Marvin Martin letting fly with a shot from the edge of the penalty area, which went in off the crossbar.

Barwell almost restored their two-goal cushion immediately

when Towers was put through, but Kidd saved well.

Banbury had a glorious chance to equalise early in the second half when Talabi had a one-on-one with Liam Castle in the Barwell goal, but the keeper spread himself well to save.

But that was as good as it got for Banbury in a scrappy second period as Barwell held on for victory.

Banbury Utd: Kidd, Cray, R Plowright, Jackson, Allen, Agyeman-Prempeh, Martin (Blossom 81), Sharif, Skendi, Dumbleton (Lait 64), Talabi (Kurishita 90). Sub not used: Ryan.

Attendance: 286.



Banbury United striker Nabil Sharif has his shirt grabbed by a Barwell opponent during Saturday's clash at Spencer Stadium

Pictures: Steve Wheeler

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CakeProperty

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Pub attracts gastro buyers

BUYERS are queuing up at a new development in North Oxfordshire after celebrity chef Marco Pierre White took over a nearby pub.

Woodland Gardens on Milton Road in Bloxham has seen more than 60 per cent of its two-, three- and four-bedroom homes sell, with a large proportion going to couples looking for a rural location.

And a key attraction to the Bewley Homes development has been the proximity of The Black Boy Inn at Milton which was taken over by M White last

By Gill Oliver

November. The homes on the development range in price from £240,000 to £395,000.

Sara Parker, head of agent Carter Jonas' new homes team, said: "Bloxham is such a beautiful village and Woodland Gardens is a superb development.

"We saw a marked increase in visitors to the development and its website in November and December and were keen to find out the reason.

"Our sales office said that it was down to Marco Pierre

White's arrival. Obviously the famous chef draws a crowd."

The Black Boy Inn, which is about a mile away from Woodland Gardens, is a historic 16th-century pub which has been completely refurbished.

The three- and four-bedroom homes at Woodland Gardens are available to buy with a five per cent deposit match scheme on selected plots for a limited time. The showhome is open Thursday to Monday, 10am to 5pm.

Call the new homes team on 0844 7255556 or visit: www.carterjonas.co.uk



A view of the Woodland Gardens development in Bloxham

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Details of the post and an application form are available from Mrs Trish Morgan, PA to Headteacher.

Closing Date: Thursday 17th January at 1pm



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12/12 Ford Fiesta 1.6 Zetec S 3Dr Blue	£16,135	£11,991	£4,144	12/12 Ford Mondeo 2.0 TDCi 163 Zetec 5Dr Silver	£16,791	£16,291	£500
12/12 Ford Fiesta 1.4 TDCi [70] Titanium 3Dr Silver	£15,885	£11,991	£3,894	12/62 Ford Fiesta 1.6 Zetec S 3Dr Black	£13,991	£13,491	£500
12/62 Ford Focus 1.6 TDCi 115 Titanium 5Dr Silver	£20,745	£16,991	£3,754	07/57 Ford Focus C-Max 1.6 Zetec 5dr Blue	£6991	£6491	£500
12/12 Ford Ka 1.2 Zetec [Start Stop] 3Dr White	£11,125	£7,991	£3,134	10/10 Vauxhall Corsa 1.2i 16v Energy 3dr Black	£6491	£5991	£500
11/61 Ford S-Max 2.0 TDCi 140 Titanium Powershift 5Dr Blue/Grey	£21,991	£19,991	£2,000	08/08 Ford Fiesta 1.25 Zetec Blue 3dr Blue	£5991	£5491	£500
12/62 Ford Ka 1.2 Zetec [Start Stop] 3Dr Red	£10,820	£8,991	£1,829	11/11 Ford KA 1.2 Edge 3dr Red	£7491	£6991	£500
11/61 Ford Grand C-Max 1.6 Titanium 5Dr Blue	£15,991	£14,491	£1,500	10/06 Ford KA Zetec 1.3 TDCi White	£7491	£6991	£500
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10/10 Renault Megane Scenic 1.5 Grand dCi Dynamique 5Dr Silver	£10,681	£9,991	£690	09/59 Ford Focus Zetec 1.6 5dr Blue	£7991	£7491	£500
09/09 Ford C-Max 2.0 TDCi Titanium 5Dr Blue	£10,991	£10,491	£500	11/11 Ford Focus 1.6 125 Titanium	£12991	£12491	£500
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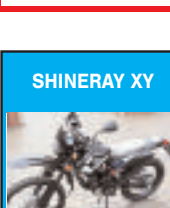
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